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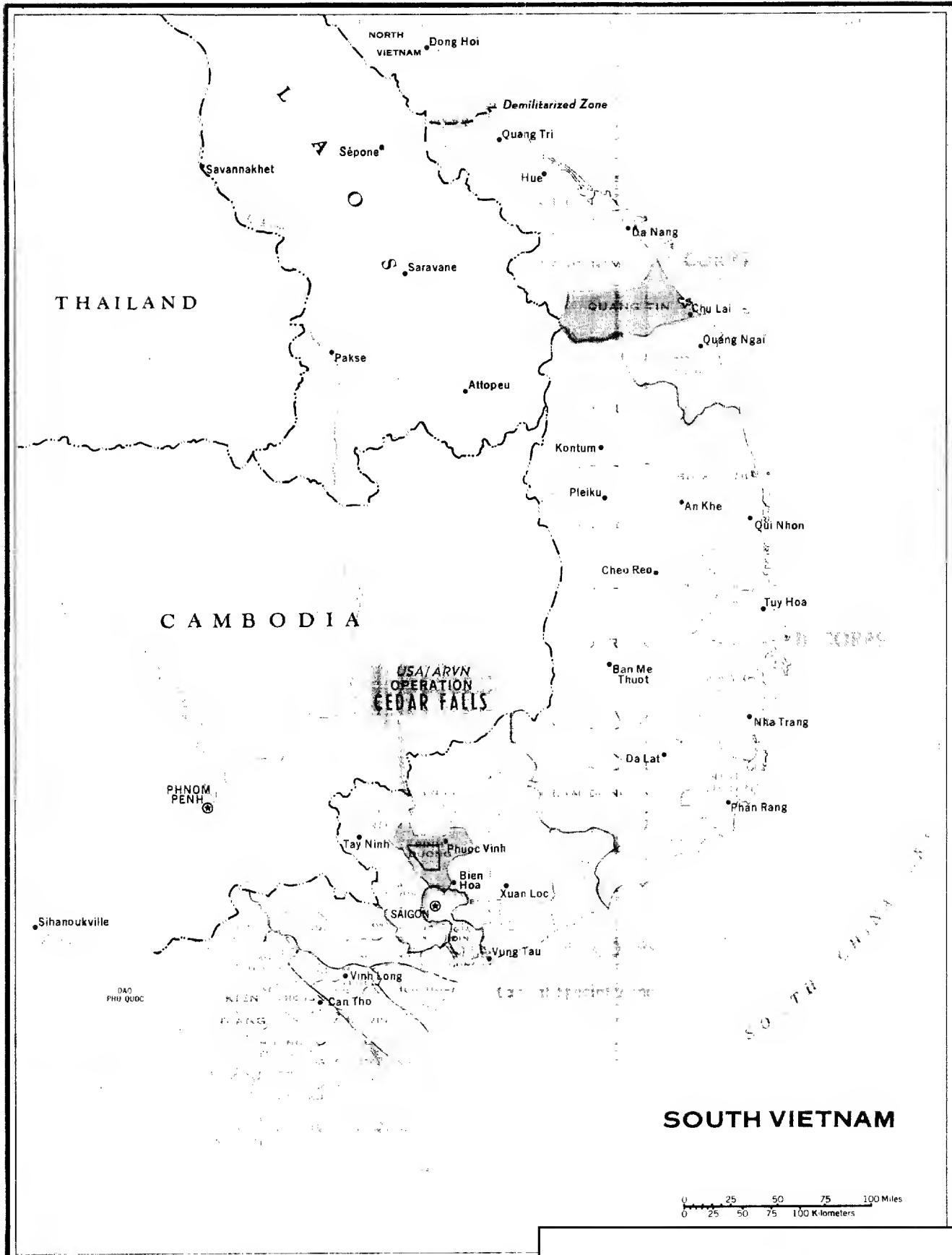
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***Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)**

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Some 23 US and South Vietnamese battalions conducting Operation CEDAR FALLS continue to sweep a key Viet Cong base area in Binh Duong Province north of Saigon, with no reports of large-scale enemy resistance thus far.

Since 7 January, Viet Cong losses include 161 killed, 29 captured, and significant quantities of food, weapons, and military supplies. US losses during the same period are 17 killed and 98 wounded.

Meanwhile, an estimated company of Viet Cong ambushed a Vietnamese Popular Force patrol near the provincial capital of Quang Tin Province on 9 January, and then engaged a government relief force, inflicting casualties of eight killed and 11 wounded. Several hours later, a nearby ARVN command post was fired upon and reported casualties of one killed and 11 wounded. Enemy losses were not reported in either incident. (Map)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: [In a recent conversation with a US official, Premier Ky edged closer to committing himself as a presidential candidate in the forthcoming constitutional government. He also outlined some potentially serious issues which would first have to be resolved.]

[Ky declared that he was under military pressure to run, but that he would first have to face the task of "informing" Chief of State Thieu, who, he said, is maneuvering to keep his own candidacy open.]

Ky and Thieu discussed the issue of a military candidate for president on 3 January, but Thieu advised postponing a decision for a few months until after the constitution is promulgated. Although Thieu probably holds an

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edge over Ky in terms of military support, Ky apparently hopes that Thieu will be content to become head of the armed forces in the future government.]

[Related to Ky's presidential candidacy--and apparently a more immediate issue--is the possible removal of Deputy Premier General Co, who has long been at odds with Ky and his supporters. Ky told the US official that he would try Co "very soon," declaring that legal action is necessary because of the large amount of money that Co has amassed through corruption.]

[Ky has become increasingly irritated with Co, who he believes is attempting to create friction among military leaders over the question of a military candidate for president.]

[General Co's capacity to resist a move by Ky to unseat him is not clear, but it could be considerable if General Thieu does not side firmly with Ky. It is somewhat doubtful that Thieu would consent to a public humiliation of Co through a trial or court martial on charges of corruption. In November, the reassignment of another powerful southerner, IV Corps commander Quang, was accomplished without trouble, but that action involved a minimal loss of prestige for Quang and was undertaken with the backing of General Thieu.]

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Venezuela: [President Leoni is faced with additional strains in relations with the military and students.]

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[Leoni could follow one of several courses of action in response to the varying pressures on him. However, if he does not station a permanent security unit on the campus, he will probably be in serious trouble with at least some sectors of the military.]

[Students at technical and high schools returned to class on 9 January. The government expects them to create disorders in response to its crackdown on Communists on 13 December. The authorities anticipate that Communist groups will attempt to organize student strikes as a prelude to more violent action. The re-opening of Central University has been delayed a month, until 15 February. This will allow conversion of its dormitories to classrooms, precluding their use as living quarters by the Communists.]

[Communist terrorism has been confined to only two incidents in the entire country since the government crackdown.]

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